



THE
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— — — — quid alat formetque poetam.

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REMEMBER to have seen in some old *Italian* Poet a fable call'd "The Education of the Muses." *Apollo* is there said to have taken them at their birth under his immediate care, and as they grew up to have instructed them according to their different capacities in the several branches of playing and singing. *Thalia*, we are told, was of a lively turn, and took delight in the most comic airs; but was at first with difficulty restrained from falling into ridiculous drolleries, and what our author calls *extravaganzas* in her manner. *Melpomene*, who was of a serious and grave disposition, indulged herself in strains of melancholy; but when she aimed at the most pathetic strokes, was often harsh, or run into wild divisions. *Clio*, and the rest of the Nine, had not yet learnt to temper their voices with sweet-

ness and variety; nor could they tell how to regulate the stops of their flutes, or touch the strings of their lyres, with judgment and grace. However, by much practice, they improved gradually under the instructions of *Apollo*, 'till at last they were able to exert all the powers of music: and they now form a compleat concert, which fills all *Parnassus* with the most enchanting harmony.

THE moral to be drawn from this little fable is naturally applied to those servants of the Muses, Authors, who must necessarily rise by the same slow degrees from their first lame attempts in cultivating the arts of *Apollo*. The best of them, without doubt, went through many more stages of writing than appears from the palpable gradations still remaining in their works. But as it is impossible to trace them from their first setting out, I shall here present the reader with the sum of my own experience, and illustrate in the life of Mr. Town, the Progress of an Author.

RIGHT or wrong, I have ever been addicted to scribbling. I was famous at school for my readiness at Crambo and capping verses: I often made themes for other boys, and sold my copy for a tart or a custard: at nine years old I was taken notice of for an *English* Distich, and afterwards immortalized myself by an *Holyday's Task* in the same language, which my master, who was himself a poet, pronounc'd to be scarce inferior to his favourite *Blackmore*. These were followed by a multitude of little pieces, that, like other fruits which come before their proper season, had nothing to recommend them but their early appearance.

FILLED however with great conceptions of my genius and importance, I could not but lament that such extraordinary parts should be confined within the narrow circle of

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my relations and acquaintance. Therefore, in order to oblige and amaze the public, I soon became a very large contributor to the Monthly Magazines. But I had the unspeakable mortification to see my favours sometimes not inserted, often postponed, often much altered, and you may be sure for the worse. On all these occasions I never failed to condemn the arrogance and folly of the compilers of these miscellanies, wondering how they could so grossly mistake their own interest, and neglect the entertainment of their readers.

IN the mean time a maiden aunt with whom I lived, a very pious old lady, turned Methodist, and often took me with her to the Tabernacle, the Foundery, and many private meetings. This made such an impression upon my mind, that I devoted myself entirely to sacred subjects, and wrote several Hymns, which were received with infinite applause by all the good women who visited my aunt; and (the servants being also Methodists) they were often sung by the whole family in the kitchen. I might perhaps in time have rivalled *Wesley* in these divine compositions, and had even begun an entire new version of the Psalms, when my aunt, changing her religion a second time, became a Moravian. But the Hymns usually sung by the United Brethren contain sentiments so sublime and so incomprehensible, that notwithstanding my late success in that kind of poetry, and the great opinion I entertained of my own talents, I durst not venture on their stile and manner.

As Love and Poetry mutually produce each other, it is no wonder that before I was seventeen I had singled out my particular *Saccharissa*. This, you may suppose, gave birth to innumerable Songs, Elegies, and Acrostics. In the space of two years I had written more love-verses than

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Waller or any other poet ; when, just as I imagined I had ryhmed myself into her good graces, I had the mortification to find that my mistress was married to a Cornet of Horse, a fellow who, I am sure, never wrote a line in his life. This threw me into such a violent rage against the whole sex, that I immediately burnt every syllable I had written in her praise, and in bitterness of soul translated the sixth Satire of *Juvenal*.

SOON after this the son and heir of Lord *Townly*, (to whom I have the honour of being a distant relation) was in a treaty of marriage with a rich heiress. I sat down immediately with great composure to write an Epithalamium on this occasion. I trimm'd *Hy-men's* torch, and invited the *Loves* and *Graces* to the wedding : *Concord* was prepared to join their hands, and *Juno* to bless them with a numerous race of children. After all these pains, when every thing was ready for the wedding, and the last hand put to the Epithalamium, the match was suddenly broke off, and my poem of course rendered useless. I was more uneasy under this disappointment than any of the parties could possibly be; 'till I was informed of the sudden marriage of a noble lord with a celebrated beauty. On this popular occasion, promising myself universal applause, I immediately published my Epithalamium ; which, like *Bayes's* Prologue, was artfully contrived to serve one purpose as well as another.

As my notions had been hitherto confined within a narrow sphere of life, my literary pursuits were consequently less important, 'till I had the opportunity of enlarging my ideas by going abroad. My travels, of which I have before hinted something to the reader, opened to me a new and extensive field for observation. I will not presume to boast, that I received any part of my education at *Geneva*, or any of those celebrated

celebrated foreign Universities, in which alone an ENGLISHMAN can be grounded in the principles of religion and liberty :—but I may say without vanity that I gleaned some useful knowledge from every place I visited. My propensity to writing followed me wherever I went; and were I to meet with encouragement by a large subscription, I could publish several volumes of curious remarks which I made in my tour. I had indeed like to have got into some unlucky scrapes, by turning author in places where the liberty of the press was never so much as heard of. At Paris I narrowly escaped being put into the *Bastile* for a little *Chanson à boire* reflecting on the Mistress of the *Grand Monarque*; and I was obliged to quit *Rome* a week sooner than I intended, for fixing on *Pasquin* a Prayer for the Pope's Toe, which was then laid up with the gout.

IT was not 'till my return from abroad, that I formally commenc'd a professed Critic, for which I now thought myself thoroughly qualified. I could draw parallels between *Marseilles* and *Denoyer*, compare the behaviour of the *French Parterre* with the *English Pit*, and have lately made a figure by affecting an indifference about the present *Burlettas*, as I took care to let every body know that I had often seen them in *Flanders*. My knowledge in theatrical affairs naturally led me to write a great number of occasional pamphlets on those topics, such as "Examens of New Plays, Letters to "the Managers," &c. Not content with this, I had a strong inclination to shine in the Drama. I often pleased myself with computing—"three benefit nights—let me see—" six hundred pounds at least—an hundred more for the "copy—besides a perpetual freedom of the House."—These were temptations not to be resisted. I sat down therefore to a Tragedy; but before I got through the first act, despairing to make it sufficiently *pathetic* for the modern taste,

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I chang'd my scheme, and began a Comedy : then again reflecting that most of our Comedies were in reality nothing but overgrown Farces, contented myself with writing what authors are now pleased to call a Comedy of two Acts. This I finished with a great deal of pains, and very much to my own satisfaction : but not being able to get it on the stage, as one house was entirely taken up with Pantomimes, and the Manager of the other had so many Farces of his own, I generously made a present of it to an actor for his benefit ;—when to my great surprize it was damn'd.

I HAVE at last resolv'd to bend all my attention, and employ all my powers, in the carrying on this my present elaborate undertaking. I am sorry to own that the success has not at all answer'd my expectations : I flatter'd myself with being universally known, read, and admir'd; but I find quite the contrary. I went into a coffee-house the other day by White-chapel Mount, where on asking for the CONNOISSEUR the woman stared at me, and said she did not know what I meant. I dined last week at a foreign ambassador's, and not a word about me or my works passed at table. I wrote to a relation at Caermarthen, desiring to know what reputation my paper has in Wales ; but he tells me that nothing in the literary way comes down there but the *King's Speech* and the *London Evening Post*. I have enquired into the sale of my first number, my second, my third, my fourth, and the last; yet I cannot assure my readers that I have sold three thousand of any one of them. In short, I give this public notice once for all, that if I don't find myself taken in all over England by the time I have published two or three hundred papers,—let them look to it—let them look to it—I'll bid adieu to my ungrateful country, go directly to Berlin, and (as Voltaire is discarded) employ my pen in the service of that Encourager of Arts and Sciences, the King of Prussia.

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